

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House of Representatives on Thursday evening unanimously passed the Travel Promotion Act (H.R. 3232), a bill that will create jobs and promote international travel to the United States at no cost to taxpayers.

Reps. Sam Farr (D-Calif.) and Jon Porter (R-Nev.) --co-chairs of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus -- are original co-sponsors of the bill. The legislation would address America's overseas travel crisis by establishing a travel promotion campaign funded by a fee on overseas travelers and contributions from the U.S. travel industry.

"Since September 11, we've seen a sharp decline in travelers visiting from abroad, and we've lost more than \$100 billion in revenue and 200,000 jobs due to that drop," Rep. Farr said. "This bill will provide a huge return on investment for the nation, both in tax revenues and jobs created. It's a no-brainer."

The legislation would create the Corporation for Travel Promotion within the U.S. Department of Commerce Department. This entity would be charged with promoting international travel to the United States, as well as publishing travel requirements for business, tourist and academic travelers.

"America has so much to offer, and I am confident this bill will create the public-private partnership needed to encourage overseas travelers to come experience the beauty and hospitality of our nation," Rep. Porter said. "We need to remind international travelers that the United States is still the greatest place in the world to visit."

The bill allows the government to charge foreign travelers from visa-waiver countries a small fee which, combined with matching funds from the private sector, would support the nonprofit corporation. The corporation could receive up to \$100 million annually. The legislation has the support of 245 Representatives and 51 Senators.

"Another benefit of this bill is the increased person-to-person contact that we will experience," Rep. Farr said. "At a time when our image abroad is tarnished, this is an opportunity to use our communities to serve as diplomats to the world. There's no better

ambassadors than the American public."

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